

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for his courtesy during a telephone call today (10 November 2006). At least a portion of the following remarks summarizes our discussion.

Claims 1, 16, 29, 33, and 37 have been amended for clarity purposes, and new claim 39 has been added. The amendments do not contain any new matter. For example, the amendment to claim 1 is supported on page 22, first full paragraph, among other places. Claims 1-39 remain pending.

The Examiner has allowed claims 16-38.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-7, 10, and 12-15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Mikkonen (U.S. patent 6,885,633). The Examiner has also rejected claims 8, 9, and 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mikkonen in view of Ammitzboell (US 6,934,292). The Examiner's rejections are respectfully traversed as follows.

Claim 1 is directed towards a "network system operable to forward data within a computer network." Claim 1 also recites "a first router having a plurality of first virtual interfaces configurable to correspond selectively to one or more physical ports of the network system, the first router being configured to enable the first virtual interfaces when the first router is assigned to be a designated router and to disable the first virtual interfaces when the first router is not assigned to be a designated router." Claim 1 also recites "a second router having a plurality of second virtual interfaces configurable to correspond selectively to one or more physical ports of the network system, the second router being configured to enable the second virtual interfaces when the second router is assigned to be a designated router and to disable the second virtual interface when the second router is not assigned to be a designated router." Claim 1 further requires "a supervisor module configured to assign a selected one of the first and second routers to be a designated router" and that "each first virtual interface of the first router has a same internet protocol (IP) address and media access control (MAC) address as each corresponding second virtual interface of the second router." Claim 1 has been amended to clarify the term "virtual interfaces" to recite that they are "configurable so as to correspond to a different set of one or more physical ports for different time periods." That is, each virtual interface is configurable to correspond selectively at different time periods to one or more physical ports, which allows flexible configuration of such virtual interfaces to any number of physical ports.

In contrast, Mikkonen teaches a fixed configuration for its interfaces. The primary reference Mikkonen is directed towards using two redundant network nodes for the purpose of

providing fault tolerance. See Abstract. Figure 1 illustrates two network nodes 100a and 100b. Each network node includes four physical port interfaces (110a~110d for node 100a and 110e~110h for node 100b). Mikkonen specifically refers to these interfaces as “four physical network interfaces 110.” See Col. 3, Lines 3-5. Accordingly, Mikkonen fails to teach or suggest virtual interfaces that can be configured to correspond to different physical ports at different time periods, in the manner claimed. It is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 is patentable over Mikkonen.

The Examiner’s rejections of the dependent claims are also respectfully traversed. However, to expedite prosecution, all of these claims will not be argued separately. Claims 2-15 each depend directly or indirectly from independent claim 1 and, therefore, are respectfully submitted to be patentable over cited art for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Further, the dependent claims require additional elements that when considered in context of the claimed inventions further patentably distinguish the invention from the cited art. For example, new claim 39 recites “wherein the first router is further configured to inform the second router of the selected one or more ports that correspond to the first virtual interfaces when the first router is assigned to be a designated router, and wherein the second router is further configured to inform the first router of the selected one or more ports that correspond to the second virtual interfaces when the second router is assigned to be a designated router.” The cited reference Mikkonen merely recites a generic “means 120 for observing the operation of another network node and producing an indication about the operational state of said another network node.” See Col. 3, Lines 52-55. Mikkonen goes on to recite examples of monitoring and testing the other network node. However, Mikkonen fails to teach or suggest any mechanism for a designated router to inform the other router of selected ports that correspond to virtual interfaces, in the manner claimed. It is also noted that the Examiner cites this same language with respect to the allowed claims as distinguishing over Mikkonen. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claim 39 is further patentable over the cited art.

Applicant believes that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

Respectfully submitted,
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